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BOOK REVIEWS

METHODS AND PRINCIPLES

Culture and Ethnology. ROBERT H. LOWIE. Douglas C. McMurtrie:
New York, 1917. 190 pp.

Although the methods and principles of modern ethnology, as conceived and cultivated in America, are well known to the small band of workers, a coherent and concise summary of the ideas for which the science of ethnology stands, and which could serve for the information of a wider public, has hitherto been lacking. This long-felt want is felicitously supplied by Dr. Lowie's booklet which has grown out of a series of lectures delivered in 1917 in the American Museum of Natural History. The cause of ethnology is here pleaded with eloquence and well-balanced judgment, and a difficult subject is presented in an attractive and lucid exposition. This work will form an excellent introduction and guidance to the raw recruit along the thorny path of ethnological research, and it will be read by the veterans with as much pleasure and profit. It should be the permanent possession of every one. together with Boas's *Mind of Primitive Man* and Wissler's new book on *The American Indian*. So many confusions, misconceptions, and prejudices in regard to what ethnology constitutes are still prevalent, even in the minds of scientists in general, especially among historians, orientalist, art-students, etc., that a book like this one will be warmly welcomed and will help to clarify the atmosphere. Dr. Lowie's universal reading, his keen analytic sense that goes straight at the root of things, and his gift of clear representation, insure his pages a piquant flavor and the constantly growing sympathy of the reader.

In his first lecture, the author endeavors to determine the relation of culture to psychology and to defend the rights of ethnology as an independent science. Psychology, as he aptly expresses it, is as impotent to reduce to really interpretative psychological principles the subjective aspect of cultural phenomena as it is to explain the historical sequence of events, and the principles of psychology are as incapable of accounting for the phenomena of culture as is gravitation to account for architectural styles. Over and above the interpretations given by psychology, there is an irreducible residuum of huge magnitude that calls for special

treatment and by its very existence vindicates the *raison d'être* of ethnology; but we need not eschew any help given by scientific psychology for the comprehension of specifically psychological components of cultural phenomena. At this point I wish the author might have made some reference to the growing importance of sexual psychology without the aid of which numerous factors in the life of all peoples cannot adequately be grasped. No sinologue, for instance, has ever been able to advance a correct explanation of the reasons why the Chinese bind (or used to bind) the feet of their women: this is a sex problem to which no historian or ethnologist (not to speak of the Chinese themselves) can make an answer. Moreover, it seems to me that for practical working purposes we are compelled to postulate the existence of a social or national psyche, whether this be correct in a strictly scientific sense or not, this psyche to be conceived, of course, as being composed of ideas and habits historically acquired and developed, and accordingly as a changeable quantity. It is a commonplace observation that the Japanese adopted and absorbed the fundamental principles of Chinese civilization; it is still more interesting to note what they did not adopt from their superior neighbors: they did not take over their costume, their domestic architecture, their furniture and kitchen, sitting on chairs and at tables (in fact retained all their ancient material possessions relative to domestic life), foot-binding, consumption of opium, not to mention numerous other customs and practises. An answer to this why has not yet been given by any ethnologist or historian of Japan. Why did Christianity conquer the peoples of the Indo-European stock, while it did not appeal to the Semites in the midst of whom it was born? Why could it never obtain any permanent influence on any nation of Asia? Why is Buddhism, the product of an Aryan society, extinct in India, the land of its birth, while it flourishes among so many non-Aryan peoples of central and eastern Asia? Or why do the tribes of Africa so easily become Mohammedanized? For each of these questions, hundreds of historical facts can be marshalled to state the merits of the particular case; but these do not bring us nearer to a satisfactory explanation. Here, and in similar problems, it seems to me the application of psychological methods or viewpoints will remain unavoidable. On the other hand, each cultural fact reacts on the tribal or national psyche, and these effects have as yet been little studied. To illustrate, among the European and many Asiatic tribes family life has always centered around the fire of the kitchen or tent; the kitchen is still the bond that unites the members of the family in our civilization (as far as they are not cor-

rupted by the institution of the family hotel). The formation of the family in any other way seems almost inconceivable to us. Yet the Chinese in this respect are radically different from others. The kitchen never formed the center of their house; on the contrary, it was always far removed from it as a separate building and entrusted to the care of male servants. There are no female cooks, and the mother of the house avoids the kitchen, where the family never assembles. While the organization of the Chinese family outwardly is very much like our own, yet the forms of family life and the psychical relations of the family members are diverse, and this difference seems to be directly traceable to influences of material causes, as given by the arrangement of habitations and the location of the kitchen.

The second lecture, "Culture and Race," forms especially attractive reading, and there is no doubt that every ethnologist will subscribe to the author's clear exposition and his statement of the relation of culture to racial traits: culture cannot be adequately explained by race, and the same race varies extraordinarily in culture even within a very narrow space of time. The Chinese and some of our American Indians, such as the ancient Central Americans and Peruvians, did attain a very high level, which may be equated with that of Europe at a relatively recent period. No term has been more misused and sinned against than the catchword "racial mentality." The anthropologist is inclined to assume that mental powers are fairly uniform through mankind, but work in different directions or are projected on different lines of activities. The limitation of activities in a certain people is not the consequence of a limitation of mentality, but merely the outcome of historical agencies and traditional training based thereon. In judging nations we are just as perverse as in judging individuals: both are judged by the average man from their outward success, while, of course, success is not necessarily caused by a higher state of mentality. The best exposure of this shallowness of judgment is to the credit of a Japanese statesman, who during the Russo-Japanese war, when his country held the attention of the world, remarked bitterly, "When we were a nation of artists you called us barbarians; now that we kill men you call us civilized."

In his third lecture Dr. Lowie discusses the relation of culture to geographical environment. Here he is particularly fortunate in the choice of his illustrations by contrasting the cultures of the Hopi and Navajo, which are thoroughly disparate despite the fact that both tribes have occupied for a long period the same part of northeastern Arizona, or by characterizing the Chukchi and Eskimo, the Bushmen and Hotten-

tot. Several interesting sidelights fall in this connection on the history of domestications. The fact that environment has a rather insignificant share in the formation of culture is patent to every one who can think objectively; nevertheless, in the face of the many pretensions made by that infertile pseudo-science, anthropogeography, it becomes our duty to antagonize its hollow dogmas on every suitable occasion. Dr. Lowie very well sums up his standpoint by saying that environment cannot explain culture because the identical environment is consistent with distinct cultures; because cultural traits persist from inertia in an unfavorable environment; because they do not develop where they would be of distinct advantage to a people; and because they may even disappear where one would least expect it on geographical principles.

Psychology, racial differences, geographical environment, are all inadequate for the interpretation of cultural phenomena. Culture is a thing *sui generis* which can be explained only in terms of itself. With this motto in mind, the author finally attacks in his fourth chapter the determinants of culture. He points out the great importance of cultural diffusion and assimilation, as, for instance, in the propagation of maize, the adoption on the part of the white settlers of the entire complex of aboriginal maize cultivation (tobacco and tea are as striking examples), the early traffic in bronze and amber, and the close connection and interrelations of the ancient Asiatic civilizations. Contact of peoples is thus an extraordinary promoter of cultural development. The theory of cultural evolution, to my mind the most inane, sterile, and pernicious theory ever conceived in the history of science (a cheap toy for the amusement of big children), is duly disparaged. It is worthy of especial mention that Dr. Lowie (p. 89) recedes to some extent from his former standpoint taken on the subject of convergencies. The majority of these now appear to him not genuine, but false analogies due to our throwing together diverse facts from ignorance of their true nature. I hope the author will discuss this point somewhat more fully in the near future for the benefit of his fellow-workers. What he has to say about survivals, rationalistic explanations, and the determinants of culture in general, belongs to the best portion of the book and will hardly provoke any contradiction. Culture cannot be forced into the straitjacket of any theory whatever it may be, nor can it be reduced to chemical or mathematical formulas. As nature has no laws, so culture has none. It is as vast and as free as the ocean, throwing its waves and currents in all directions. It is absurd to seek the origin of civilization in any particular region or to trace it to a single nation. In its present aspects, culture is

the common good of mankind, the product of human thought of all ages. It is something above or below the nations, but not a thing of their own. There is no nation (inclusive of primitive peoples) that has a culture entirely evolved from its own resources; there is no living nation that has a ghost of a claim to the generation of any fundamentals of culture. Our present and our future lie in our past. All that the practical investigator can hope for, at least for the present, is to study each cultural phenomenon as exactly as possible in its geographical distribution, its historical development, and its relation or association with other kindred ideas. The more theories will be smashed, the more new facts will be established, the better for the progress of our science.

The last chapter of Dr. Lowie's work is taken up by a thorough discussion of kinship terminologies, added as a concrete illustration of the methods propounded in the four preceding lectures. This subject is particularly his own domain, and as is well known, has elicited from his pen many contributions of permanent value.

B. LAUFER.

Organic Evolution. A Text-book. RICHARD SWANN LULL. The Macmillan Company: New York, 1917. XVIII, 729 pp., XXX plates, 253 figures. Price \$3.00 net.

The addition of another book to the extensive literature on evolutionary biology is justified by the fact that the author is a paleontologist. Of late, paleontology has fallen into disfavor with experimental biologists and students of heredity. The reason for this is, that paleontologists, seeing at every hand animals in complete agreement with their environment, have shown a tendency to describe the evolution of different organisms in terms which, though they cannot be called Lamarckian, still savor of the Lamarckian theory. Dr. Lull states his attitude as follows:

The geologic changes and the pulse of life stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect. This statement does not, however, imply the acceptance of the Lamarckian factor any more than that of natural selection, for whether the influence of a changing environment acts directly upon the creature's body, or indirectly through induced habit, or, whether it merely sets a standard to which animals must conform if they would survive, matters not; the fundamental principle remains that changing environmental conditions stimulate the sluggish evolutionary stream to quickened movement.

As the title implies, the scope of the book is unusually comprehensive and it is necessarily somewhat of a compilation. Several chapters are